

— MENDOZA —

FIVE YEARS
RETROSPECTIVE

(2012-2016)

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W I N E S



HARVEST REPORT

MENDOZA 2012

Warming Up. Low Yields.

OUTSTANDING MALBECS

The 2012 vintage will be recalled as one with the lowest yields, providing grapes with a great concentration of aromas and flavors.

In terms of nationwide figures, production in 2012 declined 22%, with respect to the 2011 vintage (2,225 million tons vs. 2,860 million tons).

Once again in 2011, as in almost every year, spring left behind a very cold and dry winter.

On September 23, there was a general frost throughout the province of Mendoza that featured the typical characteristics of a “hidden frost.” There was a moderate drop in temperature (only a few tenths below zero, depending on the area), which occurred at a crucial time when many varieties were either sprouting or had swollen buds, leading to a noticeable delay in bud break.

Early-budding varieties, such as Chardonnay, were more obviously affected and damage was observed in the unfolded apices and open leaves.

On November 8, a strong *Zonda* wind descended from the higher areas of the valleys to the plains below, causing both physical damage and the destruction of numerous shoots. This occurred mainly in vineyards and varieties which had not yet been trellised to their wires. In many places, vines were in full flowering mode. In vineyards that housed the late-harvest varieties, flowering was only about to begin. Undoubtedly, the *Zonda* caused not only immediate, noticeable

damage but also damage that was not immediately perceived, for after fruitset, a considerable amount of flower abortion and millerandage was observed.

Among the most affected varieties was Malbec, and among the least affected was Cabernet Sauvignon, due to its late phenological cycle.

In the face of such a peculiar spring, as the one described above, it is easy to conclude that the decrease in yield found in the 2012 harvest was due to a series of weather events that hit the region.

Most varieties saw a decline in yield between 10% and 60%, with Malbec lying on the higher end of the spectrum. It can safely be said that the average reduction in yield was about 30%.

The 2012 January-March period (veraison to the beginning of harvest) was warmer and drier than the previous year, when the number of days with temperatures $>32^{\circ}\text{C}$ (89.6°F) exceeded the annual average for the same period.

Malbec from the Uco Valley deserves special mention, in particular vines grown in areas such as Altamira, as their wines stand out with their intense aromas of black fruit, which have shown to be more concentrated than usual this year.

The 2012 vintage will also be remembered for the great color intensity of its reds, as well as for the finesse found in the wines' tannin structure and great aging potential.

These will be wines that may be kept for many years in bottle.



HARVEST REPORT

MENDOZA 2013 *Cooling Down Again.*

UCO VALLEY TERROIRS CHAMPIONING THE QUALITY

Three consecutive years of mid-to-low yields were followed by 2013, which had an average crop size.

The cold came quickly (and lasted all of February to the beginning of March), which ironed the maturity of the vines. Early autumn was also cold, which led to a natural high acidity and low pH, with relatively low sugar levels, providing a fantastic natural balance in the wines.

The sandy and rocky soils of the Uco Valley reacted to the cold better than the valley floor, which consists of a clay and limestone composition. In these low-lying areas the sugar reached its peak and the pH drops quickly, disrupting the natural balance of the wines.

Average temperatures in January were about one degree °C lower than in 2012, with cooler than average nights as well.

It appears as if this harvest will mirror other cold harvests (2001, 2005, 2008, 2010, and 2011): Malbecs from Altamira and Gualtallary display intense, deep powerful color with good tonality and typical aromas, whereas Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah from Agrelo excel over the other varieties.

The more we know and explore our different terroirs along the Uco and Luján Valleys, the more we learn and can apply to the grapes during vinification and ageing.

Malbecs from Altamira are characterized by their fine, velvety and long silky tannins.

Malbecs from Gualtallary show firmer, more structured and fine grained tannins, with huge ageing potential.

And last, but not least, Malbecs from Agrelo have great personality, with fine, soft, round and sweet tannin structure.



HARVEST REPORT

MENDOZA 2014 *Another cold year!*

THE NEW CHACAYES MALBEC

Compared with the 2013 vintage, annual grape production fell by 8%. The 2014 harvest didn't take longer than the one in 2013.

The 2013 harvest was the coldest we experienced since the founding of the winery in 1999, with similar temperatures to that of 2001. After the warm and dry months of December and January, the cold weather during February, March and April, along with the rain that fell during harvest season, set defining characteristics for the different Mendocinian terroirs.

It is important to draw special attention to these terroirs in order to completely understand them. Here, the level of detail and precision during harvest is fundamental for the definition of quality. (See below regarding the differences between different terroir units, such as Gualtallary North vs Gualtallary West.)

Late terroirs like Altamira, optimal for medium or long cycle varieties, such as Malbec and Cabernet, are an example of the aforementioned. These terroirs do not stand out when used for short cycle varieties (e.g. Syrah with good sanitary conditions or moderate yields), or when compared with early terroirs such as that found in Vista Flores.

The crop level also varied depending on the area: lower than normal in the North and East of Mendoza, average in the center and slightly higher than the average in the area surrounding the Mendoza River and Uco Valley (e.g. as relates to Malbec and other red varieties).

In any case, the grapes that excelled the most were Malbec from the highlands of the Uco Valley (especially from the Gualtallary and High Tunuyán River lands, such as Vista Flores and Chacayes).

Our Harvest

The 2014 harvest started on February 27th at the Alluvia Estate located in Gualtallary with our Pinot Noir. Harvest ended on April 30th, a week earlier than in 2013, with the Cabernet Sauvignon from the *Presidente* Estate, located in Los Árboles, Tunuyán.

White varieties were able to overcome the disparate weather conditions since they primarily came from the regions of Gualtallary, Los Árboles and Vista Flores in the Uco Valley. This area is well-known for its stony-sandy soils that allow adequate water drainage. A fresh white wine with citrus, mineral and floral notes was the ending result.

In cool areas, terroirs with stony soils that allow for early ripening have their own fingerprints in certain vintages, as was found in 2014. For example: North-East Gualtallary vs. South-West Gualtallary: while the first area excels due to the calcareous components found in its soil profile (resulting in red fruit notes with a marked mineral accent), the second region is characterized for its black fruit and violet notes.



HARVEST REPORT

MENDOZA 2015

Another cool vintage

GREAT MALBECS FROM EXCEPTIONAL TERROIRS

We can define the 2015 harvest as being a very challenging one, where the mission was to rely only on the very best vineyards in order to make the finest wines.

The growing cycle of 2014-2015 took place earlier compared to the historical average, with a 1-week-to-10-day window where a nice and homogeneous budbreak occurred. The maximum and minimum diurnal temperature swings during the warmest months were lower than the historic average, making 2015 the fourth consecutive cooler-than-normal harvest (the last 'warm' harvest within Mendoza was in 2012).

The spring season started dry, but gave way to huge rainfall later in the summer, especially during the months of January, February and the first quarter of March.

During February, the rainfall reached its peak. If we take into account the budbreak-to-harvest period (October-April), rains were 30% over the historic average in most of the regions.

In regions with heavy clay soils, rot problems were also more significant. Exceptional sites like those in the Upper Uco Valley produced fine wines with remarkable balance, showing consistency through the time.

In 2015, the main activity for viticulturists, producers and winemakers was to separate the best plots.

Dense soil regions like La Consulta, Eugenio Bustos, the lower parts of Vista Flores, Agrelo and Perdriel, the center of Tunuyán and Tupungato had more problems.

2015 was definitely not a good year for Cabernet Sauvignon. This variety produced wines that were not too intense in color, and with an absence of character.

Malbecs from different regions like Gualtallary, Los Chacayes, Altamira, Los Árboles and some vineyards from El Peral, along with the high regions from Agrelo, were highlighted. For the wines coming from our very top terroirs, we expect wines with austere tannins, a more delineated structure, great acidity and long ageing potential.



HARVEST REPORT

MENDOZA 2016

Challenging year but with amazing wines

MALBEC AND CABERNET FRANC FROM UCO VALLEY, HIGHLIGHTED

The 2016 harvest will be remembered by all who produce wines as being perhaps the most challenging in the last two decades, as it was one of the coolest and, at the same time, one of the scarcest in the last 60 years. With the presence of “*El Niño*”, many believed that 2016 would be like 1998 but, thankfully, it wasn’t. Thanks to optimal vineyard management, vines weren’t affected by rot as they were in that year.

Harvest was the lowest since 1992, which took a big hit on the 4th of November when 50% of the production was washed away by a terrible frost. In 2012, we picked 19.4 million quintals whereas in 2016 we reached a total production of only 17.4 million quintals.

“This harvest has broken the mold” -I like to quote it like that - due to the weather conditions (cold and wet), and therefore the 2016 harvest cannot be compared with any other in the last 3 decades.

Even though it wasn’t an easy harvest, however, in many “appellations,” as we like to call them, we picked “textbook” grapes. If Mendoza is known for wines with a good balance (that is: balance between natural acidity, lower levels of alcohol and an appropriate phenolic maturity), then this was the year!

It was a defying harvest, but this fact didn’t stop us from producing some amazing wines, although the volume will be very tiny.

At Dominio del Plata we were able to ferment grapes with the same, or even healthier, quality than in 2015, which was a difficult year as well.

The impact of the climate on the phenological phases

Post-harvest in 2015, one of the driest winters on record occurred. The 2015 season started with a cold and humid spring in most of the regions. Rainfall in September and November stayed below the historical average registered during 1981-2010. November rebalanced to the historical average, and by the end of December-to-mid-April 2016, we had lower maximum, medium and minimum temperature records, with more rains than the historical average for these months.

This hydric situation caused a delay in every phenological phase of the vine by about 20 days: from budbreak, to flowering, blossom, veraison and all the way to the harvest. The phenology never caught up, resulting in a 2016 harvest that, depending on the region, was up to 3 weeks later than normal and occurred in a much shorter window.

It was remarkable to see veraison in cold regions like Gualtallary and Altamira within the Uco Valley.

This particular cycle of the vine occurred by the end of February, when normally it happens between mid-January or at the end of that month.



HARVEST REPORT

MENDOZA 2016

Challenging year but with amazing wines

MALBEC AND CABERNET FRANC FROM UCO VALLEY, HIGHLIGHTED

For those who love working with bioclimatic data, we emphasize that this was a Burgundian year because of the bioclimatic rates (heat summation), which are very typical from a cold region like Burgundy (region W I), instead of a warmer one (W II or III).

During September (when flower bloom is about to occur), we had the first late frosts, which depending on the region and varieties, caused a significant decrease in flowering from about 20% to 50%.

It was easily noticeable that Malbec vineyards from the Uco Valley with an average production of 2,5 to 4 tons per hectare exhibited the same “cold effect” suffered by some Chardonnay vines, reducing its overall productive potential.

The eastern region of Mendoza was the most affected. Not only top quality grapes but also bulk-grapes (known as “cerezas” and “criollas”) suffered a considerable decrease in production from about 40% to 50%.

Fortunately the weather was cooler in March and April, and drier than in January and February. The 27th of March received an unusual “zonda” wind that raised the maximum temperature up to 32-34 °C, depending on the specific region, driving down humidity levels to 20% and giving us the chance to bring our best grapes to the winery.

Thus, the 2016 harvest started almost 3 weeks later and ended one week earlier than usual. Snowfall, which occurred

by the end of April (on the 24th and 25th at the Upper Uco Valley), marked the end of the harvest in a natural way (where the most intelligent grape growers picked everything one week before that defining moment happened).

Regions and grapes which excelled in the harvest

This was a harvest where the top sites were highlighted. In regions with stony and sandy soils, like many of the Uco Valley, the quality of the grapes was amazing. I would like to highlight Los Chacayes because it is the warmest place within the region and its fruit was able to ripen perfectly well.

Gualtallary, as always, stands out for its indomitable spirit, giving fresh, austere, linear and very elegant wines.

If we speak to the varietal wines, the Malbec from Uco Valley stands out as well as the Cabernet Franc.

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